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ANGLO-FRENCH COMMERCIAL RIVALRY, 1700-1750: THE WESTERN PHASE, I.¹

THE rivalry between England and France is perhaps the most conspicuous feature of eighteenth-century history from 1700 to 1763. The part that commercial competition played in accentuating that rivalry, though readily understood, has received inadequate treatment at the hands of the historians. Much still remains obscure and many important relations still remain untraced, but enough stands clearly before us to render comprehensible the main features of the situation.

In the contest for colonial and commercial control of the New World, which began at the close of the fifteenth century, a movement was ushered in which has no parallel in history until the present day. Portugal and Spain, the first of the European states to enter the field of exploration, were spared the cut-throat rivalry of later times by the papal line of demarcation, and each power became a monopolist in its assigned portion of the world. But the ascendancy of these states was short-lived, owing to the limitations of their colonial interests, for Spain from the beginning and Portugal for a considerable period, though to a lesser degree, acted as gold and silver supplying countries, and pushed their cult of the metals to such an extreme as to become in large part minor competitors in the rivalry of later times. Though each remained a factor to be reckoned with, even after 1700 when the great age of the West Indies began, yet each was already on its decline and its attitude was largely defensive as far as the other powers were concerned.

As compared with the Dutch, the Spaniards and Portuguese were but pawns in the great contest. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, Hollanders and Zeelanders were controlling the carrying trade between the Mediterranean and the Baltic and were already encroaching on the coastwise traffic of the Iberian Peninsula. With the turn of the century, during the course of the war with Spain,

¹ This paper, which in briefer form was read before the International Congress of Historical Studies at London in April, 1913, is based in large part on the writings of the eighteenth-century mercantilist pamphleteers, and designedly so. My object has been not so much to discover what the actual conditions were, as to understand what contemporary writers thought they were. Final conclusions on the general subject must await, of course, a thorough investigation of other classes of material, chiefly documentary, in England, France, and America.

to which Portugal was at that time annexed, they pushed their way into the far East, ousting the Portuguese from their seats in the Indies and seizing all Portuguese commerce in those parts. In 1623 they began the attack on the Spanish plate-fleets, obtained control of the most important places held by the Portuguese in Guinea, and, though unable to maintain a hold on the Lower Amazon, succeeded in dispossessing the Portuguese of six of their fourteen coast provinces in Brazil, establishing their capital at Recife (Pernambuco).² With the attainment of unity and independence, the states of the Dutch Republic started on a career of commercial activity that carried their ships into all quarters of the globe, and for a century and a half their vessels came and went as agents of demand and supply, distributing the staples of the world-market and acting as purveyors and middlemen of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. From 1600 to 1675 the Dutch were at the height of their commercial supremacy, and their vessels were in every port searching for opportunities of traffic. The early French colonies in the West Indies depended on the Dutch ships for their very existence,³ and the British colonies as well deemed the Dutch carrying trade essential to their own prosperity.⁴ The Dutch vessels carried fish from the British Seas, tobacco from the American continent, and sugar, tobacco, and other tropical products from the West Indies, and exchanged them for food stuffs and manufactured goods from France, Spain, Portugal, and the Straits, and from the East Countries, Germany, and Brabant.⁵ East and west, north and south, sometimes in ports of their own making, but more often in the ports of colonies founded by other nations, Dutch merchants and traders, sea-captains and masters bartered and sold their ladings for goods or ready money, and returned with well-filled vessels, either directly to other countries or to their own harbors, notably Amsterdam, where the staples of America, Africa, and the Orient were worked up into manufactured articles or increased in value by refining or distilling and then re-exported and sold to their European neighbors. The Dutch never

² Huet, *Memoirs of the Dutch Trade* (transl., 1722); Campbell, *Candid and Impartial Considerations on the Nature of the Sugar Trade* (1763), pp. 14-16; Edmundson, *English Historical Review*, "Dutch Power in Brazil", XI. 231, XIV. 676, "The Dutch in the Amazon", XVIII. 642, XIX. 1.

³ Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy*, pp. 2, 3, 19-20. John Scott says that before 1652, when the navigation act of 1651 debarred them from the trade, the Dutch, "by the great credit which they had given the planters in Barbadoes, had brought that island to its utmost perfection". "Description of Barbadoes", British Museum, Sloane 3662, ff. 62-50 (reversed).

⁴ Beer, *The Origins of the British Colonial System*, pp. 356-358.

⁵ *A Collection of Advertisements, Advices, and Directions relating to the Royal Fishery within the British Seas* (1695), pp. 22-23.

became effective colonists because the trade motive was always uppermost in their minds, but they won their great success by adhering to "the simple and plain maxim that those who can sell the best commodity cheapest will always command the market".⁶ In an era of colonial beginnings the Dutch were as indispensable to the world's progress as are the great distributing agents of the present day.

England and France, without a merchant marine at this stage of their maritime development, viewed with alarm the maritime ascendancy of the Dutch and saw with indignation the mastery that the latter had obtained over the commercial concerns of their colonies. But before 1650 neither country had attained that condition of internal peace which rendered successful competition possible. They could do little with a people whose business organization was so complete and whose trading instinct was so highly developed that it could underbid competitors both in prices and in freight-rates, and could meet the demands of its customers in the variety and abundance of the goods offered better than any other nation in the world. Competition with the Dutch was bound to result in failure. A matching of wits in the field of business enterprise and shrewdness was a game that neither French nor English merchants were prepared to engage in with any hope of success. Whenever they tried it the results were inglorious, as in the case of the whale fishery, from which the whalers of England and New England were never able to drive their Dutch rivals,⁷ and of the herring fishery, "the greatest trade and the best gold mine belonging to the United Provinces",⁸ in which the Dutch were supreme well on into the eighteenth century, despite long and searching inquiry on England's part into the causes of their superiority, and frequent attempts to emulate their methods and policy.⁹ There was no chance of success in open

⁶ Campbell, *Candid and Impartial Consideration*, p. 19. See Decker, *An Essay, on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade* (second ed., 1750), pp. 18, 104, and Sir William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (eighth ed., 1747).

⁷ On the whale fishery see Otis Little, *The State of the Trade of the Northern Colonies Considered* (1748), p. 17. Sir Francis Brewster, writing in 1702, said, "The Dutch and Hamburgers, not to name the French, Employ near Twenty Thousand Men in the Greenland-fishing, and we not One." *New Essays on Trade* (1702), p. 6.

⁸ This sentence is taken from a proclamation of the States General, dated July 19, 1624.

⁹ In 1663 the Council of Trade considered at one of its meetings how best to gain and improve the fishery trade, and in the course of the debate made a careful inquiry into the reasons for the success of the Dutch. Andrews, *Committees, Commissions, and Councils*, pp. 82-84. Contemporary pamphlet literature contains frequent reference to Dutch methods and success. See, for example, William de Britaine, *The Dutch Usurpation* (1672), pp. 30-31; Petyt, *Britania*

rivalry, for in a trade free to all nations, the Dutch were able to hold their own before the world.

Hence the only alternative was deliberate war. The Dutch must be driven from the field by force. Partly as a cause and partly as a consequence of this necessity, there were gradually shaped in the minds of those engaged in the economic upbuilding of the maritime states of the period certain ideas regarding the utility of colonies, never very well defined, but based on the principle that outlying possessions were of value only as far as their resources reinforced the strength of the mother state and aided in the promotion of her material welfare.¹⁰ Experience soon tended to crystallize these ideas and to bring into prominence three commercial factors: the mother-country; the colonies with their tropical products; and certain supplemental areas of supply, such as Africa with its slaves and the temperate zone colonies with their provisions, live stock, and lumber, all of which were essential to the prosperity of the parent state, in furnishing the resources needed to meet the inevitable conflict with other European powers. The conflict was inevitable because to the mercantilist the ascendancy of one state was gained at the ex-

Languens (1680), pp. 167-168; Withers, *The Dutch better Friends than the French* (1713), which contains answers to nine charges against the Dutch as rivals in trade; and Wood, *Survey of Trade* (1718), pp. 100-101. The fullest contemporary survey of English and Dutch rivalry in the fishery is *A Collection of Advertisements, Advices, and Directions* (1695), which endeavors to show why the English fishery was unprofitable and the Dutch successful. For the general subject see Elder, *The Royal Fishery Company of the Seventeenth Century*. A frequent topic of discussion in English naval and fishery circles was the Dutch encroachment on the British sovereignty of the seas and their supplanting "by artifice the trade and traffic of the king's subjects". Arguments were constantly presented to prove "the King's exclusive propriety of dominion in the seas coasting on his Kingdom both as to passage and fishing therein". Tanner, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Library of Samuel Pepys, I., Sea Manuscripts*, pp. 58-59. Fuller, *The Sovereignty of the Sea* (1911), presents in an admirable and authoritative manner an exposition of this subject. He shows that the claim was a doctrine of the Stuarts, "introduced from Scotland to England with that dynasty, and terminating with it", and that it was aimed particularly against the Dutch. The boundaries of the British Seas are given on pages 521-522 of his work.

¹⁰ Campbell, writing of the islands ceded by the treaty of 1763, in his *Candid and Impartial Considerations*, pp. 203-204, states the case as follows: "To explain the true value, and to ascertain the real importance of those islands, that are now become ours. This can be only done, by contemplating them in different lights, that is, in those several and separate points of view, from which they may every one of them become more or less, immediately or remotely, directly or indirectly, assisting to the interests, increasing the power, augmenting the commerce, extending the navigation, and thereby promoting the welfare of Great Britain; or, in other words, conducing to the industry, the independency, and the happiness, of their fellow citizens and fellow subjects, who are the inhabitants of this their Mother Country. These are the great ends, these the ultimate design of Colonies."

pense of the others, either by an enlargement of the sources of the wealth of the state or by the destruction of the sources of a rival's wealth. Trade and conquest went together.¹¹ As in the seventeenth century the English and French were the chief colonizing powers, their success could be won only by driving the Dutch from the established position which the latter had won as traffickers in the world's market.

England was the first to begin the attack. As early as 1621, an order in Council forbade the colonists of Virginia to permit strangers to trade with them and required them to ship their tobacco directly to England. This order was repeated several times between 1621 and 1634. Then came the navigation act of 1651, prohibiting every nation to bring into England any goods or merchandise but what were of their own growth or manufacture; three wars between 1652 and 1674; the wider navigation acts of 1660, 1663, and 1672; the seizure of New Netherland in America in 1664; the various struggles for control in the East and along the Guinea Coast, all of which show that England and Holland were engaged in a bitter commercial war,

¹¹ This idea underlay at all times the reasoning of the mercantilist pamphleteers. Citations from five of them will suffice:

"We should consider, that our Navigation can neither be kept or enlarged by the same Methods it had its former growth; we had then no Competitors, but we have now so many and powerful, that we may reasonably fear a time when our Navigation must be managed, as the Jews Built the Walls of Jerusalem, one hand in the Work, and the other to hold a Weapon." Brewster, *New Essays on Trade* (1702), preface.

"Let us learn to consider our Sugar Colonies as engaged in a mortal combat with those of Foreign Nations, in which either they or we, according to all human probability, must fall." *Caribbeana* (1741), I. 195.

"Ruining the trade of our adversaries and thereby raising our own." *The State of the Nation Considered* (1747), p. 10.

"As every state in Europe seems desirous of increasing its Trade, and the Acquisition of Wealth enlarges the Means of power, it is necessary, in order to preserve an Equality with them, that this Kingdom extends its Commerce in proportion; but to acquire a Superiority, due Encouragement ought to be given to such of its Branches, as will most effectually enrich its Inhabitants. As trade enables the Subject to support the Administration of Government, the lessening or destroying that of a Rival, has the same effect, as if this Kingdom had enlarged the Sources of its own Wealth; it is evident from hence, that it is not sufficient to support the Credit of a Country with its Neighbours, that its Commerce be enlarged only, unless its Increase be proportionate to theirs. But, as an Ascendency is to be gained by checking the Growth of theirs, as well as by the Increase of our own, whenever one of these happens to be the Consequence of the other to this Nation, its Figure and Reputation will rise to a greater Height than ever." Otis Little, *The State of the Trade of the Northern Colonies Considered* (1748), pp. 8-9.

The French now endeavor "to obstruct the English Commerce in all Parts of the World, as by that means they will not only increase their own Power and Influence, but in proportion weaken ours". *Wisdom and Policy of the French* (1755), p. 125.

and that England was endeavoring to break the commercial net that the Dutch had woven about her and her colonies. France began the attack with the rise of Colbert. Cayenne was captured in 1664. A high protective tariff of the same year was continued by new duties imposed on foreign manufactures in 1667. These duties, which were abolished in 1668 owing to Dutch retaliation but re-established after Colbert's death in 1683, led to trade quarrels which preceded and in large part caused the wars between France and Holland at the end of the century. During this period decrees were issued forbidding the governors of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and other French West India islands, to receive and trade with the Dutch vessels, and a new West India Company was granted its monopoly for the express purpose of undermining the Dutch trade. Constant iteration of commands to colonial governors, the conviction and punishment of offenders, and successful efforts to drive out foreigners found cruising in the waters of the French West Indies had their effect and Dutch trade decreased.¹² The French merchant marine grew in size and strength. The founding of the Senegal Company in 1672 ended in the capture from the Dutch of the island of Goree and of Arguin five years later, and led to the establishment of French control over the African trade from Cape Blanco to the Gambia River. Similarly the incorporation of the English Royal African Company in 1672 and the royal confirmation of its monopoly from Sallee to the Cape of Good Hope added a fourth to the competitors for the African trade,¹³ and was followed by many years of rival trading in West Africa, in which Dutch, English, French, and Portuguese all had a part. Already had the Portuguese, freed at last from the domination of Spain in 1640, recovered control of their possessions in Brazil, and this loss to the Dutch was only in part met by the English restoration of Surinam in the treaty of Breda of 1667.

But the Dutch fought hard for the retention of their monopoly. In this effort they were aided by the French and English colonies themselves, which having experienced the advantages of an open market submitted unwillingly to the enforcement of laws that

¹² Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy*, chs. VIII. and IX.; *An Inquiry into the Revenue, Credit and Commerce of France* (1742), pp. 24-26.

¹³ "Account of the Limits and Trade of the Royal African Company", *Cal. St. P., Col.*, 1669-1674, § 936. This account, undated but belonging to the period between 1672 and 1697, tells us that the slaves obtained by the company were sent to the American plantations, "which cannot subsist without them", but that all other commodities were carried to England. This statement is an early recognition of the importance of Africa as a supplemental area of supply for the tropical British Colonies.

seemed to sacrifice their prosperity to that of the mother-country.¹⁴ Both in Guadeloupe and in Martinique, the planters were unfriendly and even hostile to the French West India Company, because it failed to meet their needs as the Dutch had done and in its business dealings was much less efficient than the Dutch had been.¹⁵ In Barbadoes and the Leeward Islands the British navigation acts aroused strong opposition, and in Barbadoes, at least, the complaint was heard that the English merchant was less liberal than the Dutch, and the Royal African Company less satisfactory than the Dutch slave-traders. Even in the seventeenth century the Barbadoes planters insisted that the sugar trade was much burdened by being confined to one market, and in the next century the enumeration of sugar was the subject of constant complaint.¹⁶ Despite the navigation acts and other instruments of commercial warfare, the Dutch were far from despoiled of their traffic. They continued to lead in the whale and herring fisheries in the waters of the North Atlantic and the North Sea; they remained the greatest traders along the Guinea Coast and a thorn in the flesh of the Royal African Company; and after the African trade was thrown open in 1697, they competed successfully with the company and with private British traders through half the eighteenth century.¹⁷ They held important positions in the West Indies and continued to be sugar carriers throughout our colonial period, and they dominated the route to the East and controlled the Spice Islands for many years after the colonies had won their independence. Both Dalby Thomas and Sir Josiah Child speak of the menace of Dutch rivalry, and as late as 1739, Sir Matthew Decker can call the Dutch "our great rivals in trade", referring chiefly to trade with the European continent.¹⁸

¹⁴ Mr. Beer says, "It cannot be questioned that the laws of trade were retarding the economic development of these [the Leeward] islands." *The Old Colonial System*, pt. I., vol. II., pp. 33, 45.

¹⁵ Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy*, pp. 90-99, 101-106, 108, 179.

¹⁶ Littleton, in *The Groans of the Plantations* (1689), a very pessimistic and highly exaggerated presentation of the condition of things in Barbadoes, enumerates seven burdens on the sugar trade at that time: the four and a half per cent. export duty, "extorted from us against our wills"; customs duties at home; the act of 1672, preventing export to the other British plantations; the enumeration of 1660; the act of 1663; the monopoly of the negro trade granted to the Royal African Company; and the added duties on sugar imported into England after 1685.

¹⁷ Houston, *Some New and Accurate Observations of the Coast of Guinea* (1725), pp. 18-19; Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West Indies* (1735), pp. 149-186.

¹⁸ Decker, *Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade* (1744), p. 20. This work, begun in 1739, is full of references to the superiority of the Dutch. Contemporary opinion regarding the effectiveness of the Dutch rivalry can be inferred from the fact that in 1713 John Withers found it necessary to

But the Dutch trade, though strongly entrenched, was gradually broken as far as America and the West Indian colonies were concerned. At the close of the seventeenth century France and England, the greatest states of the European world, after persistent efforts for forty years, had deprived the Dutch of their maritime and commercial supremacy. They now stood face to face, two powers actuated by like commercial and colonizing aims. Neither Portugal, Spain, nor Holland had sought for colonial power in the mercantilist sense of the term, for the discovery of mines early diverted in a measure the attention of the Portuguese, the Spaniards were ambitious for gold and conquest, and the Dutch had few territorial and colonizing designs. France and England were fairly matched rivals, in that their policies were the same, to acquire colonies in the interest of trade, shipping, and manufactures, to exclude the foreigner from the colonial market, and to make the welfare and wealth of the mother state the first and chief object of the efforts of all, colonies and mother-country alike.

The two great antagonists faced each other in five different parts of the world, India, Africa, the West Indies, Canada, and the Mississippi; and as far as the Atlantic Basin was concerned they wrestled and fought for the control of four groups of economic commodities: negroes; sugar, tobacco, indigo, and other tropical and semi-tropical products, among which sugar was by far the most important; fish; furs and naval stores. In each of these particulars the growth of French trade and colonization after 1700 seemed to threaten the supremacy of England, and during the years before 1750 intensified the rivalry of the two powers until that rivalry culminated in armed conflict in the years from 1756 to 1763. The struggle took place in the East as well as the West, but it is to the latter phase that I would direct attention here.

The struggle for the control of the fisheries is as old as the settlement of the colonies, and has in diminished form survived until very recent times. Even in 1670 the English complained that "the French in their seamen and shipping by their fishery do much increase",¹⁹ and a few years later Petyt in *Britania Languens* could assert that the Iceland fishing was very much decayed and the New-

write a letter "from a Citizen to a Country Gentleman", entitled *The Dutch better Friends than the French*, in which he argued against a prevailing British opinion that the Dutch were "rivals with us in our trade, and undermine us in our commerce; and that if these Froglanders were once crushed, the trade of the world would be our own", pp. 33-34. He endeavored to show that in reality the French were England's great rivals and the Dutch England's friends. See above, note 9.

¹⁹ *Cal. St. P., Col.*, 1669-1674, § 362, 1.

foundland fishing and Greenland fishing quite lost, the Dutch having driven the English out of these trades and the French of later years having "struck into a good share of the whole, beating out the English more and more".²⁰ "At this time", says Mr. Beer, "the French were rapidly acquiring an unquestionable superiority. They made more and better cured fish and arrived earlier at the European markets."²¹ The New Englanders resented the various surrenders of Nova Scotia to France as parting with a noble fishery and as an execrable treachery to the best interests of all,²² and they welcomed with high approval the conquest of that country in 1710, as a check to the growing superiority of the French, who before 1700 were threatening to drive the English out of the Continental fish market.²³ In 1731 a well-informed writer, commenting on the Newfoundland fishery, could speak of the French as "our most prejudicial rivals in the fishery of those parts".²⁴

In the minds of the merchants and colonists of the early eighteenth century fish and furs were classed together, with lumber and the mast trade holding a place of scarcely inferior importance. The enumeration of naval stores in 1706 and of beaver and other furs in 1722 was in part an effort to keep those valuable staples out of the hands of the French, and Cadwallader Colden, in his essays on the Indian trade,²⁵ devoted considerable space to a discussion of the relative strength of the English and French in their control over the traffic in furs. As early as 1729 the merchants complained that the French were underselling the English in foreign beaver markets.²⁶ No one saw more clearly the nature of the struggle than did Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, and in his correspondence from 1741 to 1756 we find special stress laid on the economic significance of the contest for Canada. He viewed the capture of Louisburg in 1745 and the projected Canadian expedition of the next year not in terms of conquest but of codfish and peltry, and he deemed the great merit of his own services to the British crown

²⁰ Petyt, *Britania Languens or a Discourse of Trade* (1680), pp. 167-169.

²¹ *The Old Colonial System*, pt. I., vol. II., pp. 227-228.

²² *Cal. St. P., Col.*, 1669-1674, § 68, 1697-1699, § 82, 1699, §§ 247, 746, VII.

²³ After the Restoration, says Mr. Beer, "the English were entirely driven out of the French market and had difficulty in maintaining themselves in Portugal, Spain, and Italy". *The Old Colonial System*, pt. I., vol. II., p. 227.

²⁴ *A Short Answer to an Elaborate Pamphlet* (1731), p. 17. Postlethwayt could say in 1750 that the French had a larger number of vessels than the English in the fishery, and were able to supply themselves with what they formerly had from English ships and also parts of Spain and Italy. Their fishery ascendancy covered cod from Newfoundland, herring from the North Sea, and whales from northern waters. *Short State*, pp. 81-end.

²⁵ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, V. 726-733.

²⁶ *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, VI. 207; cf. vol. III., § 165.

to lie in his having saved the English codfishery more than once from falling into the hands of the French.²⁷ When he urged upon the British government the conquest of Canada, he emphasized its importance as throwing the whole fur-trade into British hands, as breaking up the French fishery settlements in the gulf and river of St. Lawrence, and as turning the great profits and advantages of the fishery, with its demand for rum and clothing and its value as a nursery for seamen, over to the subjects of Great Britain.²⁸ He viewed the French encroachments on Maine and New Hampshire as an interference with the mast trade, because from that frontier the royal navy drew its supply of masts and yards, and he looked on the struggle for the Mohawk Valley as a contest for the beaver trade, the diminution of which provoked war with the French in Canada.²⁹ He showed himself a mercantilist when he saw that in the struggle with France the success of England's commercial policy was at stake. Should England drive France from America, he said, "the profits of the whole trade of these colonies will all finally center in her, her navigation will be greatly increased, and the balance of her growing trade with North America will forever be in her favor; and what seems to make these advantages still more valuable is that they weaken the power of France whilst they add to that of Great Britain."³⁰ But Shirley's warnings were not heeded. English eyes were fixed on the tropics and the sugar trade, and Louisburg was given back to France in 1748.³¹ France maintained her leadership in the western fisheries, and both in Canada and the Mississippi Valley, from the Illinois Country to the Gulf, extended the area of her fur-trade, that valuable trade in the skins of the lynx, muskrat, otter, beaver, and other furred denizens of the wilderness, which played so important a part in the colonial activity of the time.

Much more serious from the standpoint of the mercantilist was the rivalry of England and France in Africa and the West Indies, for there lay the traffic in slaves and the seat of the sugar trade.

²⁷ *Correspondence of William Shirley* (ed. Lincoln), I. 162, 163, 243; II. 1-2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I. 284-285.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I. 328, 348, 351, 452; II. 45, 59-60, 149, 180, 292-293.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I. 285.

³¹ The author of *The State of the Nation Considered* (1747), in speaking of the war of 1745-1746, says that the object was "the destruction of the French trade and shipping" and that as the result of the capture of Louisburg the fur-trade was lost to the French "totally on Canada side", there remaining "only their trade to the West Indies and the Mississippi", which, he adds, "we must be guilty of the highest negligence imaginable to suffer them to carry on another summer", pp. 4-5, 36-37. To this writer, who in 1747 criticized the conduct of the war because the "genius of Britain droopt", the surrender of Louisburg must have seemed a terrible mistake.

For the French, the production of sugar centred in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Santo Domingo; for the English, first in Surinam, and then in Barbadoes, the Leeward Islands, and Jamaica. Though Barbadoes began with indigo, ginger, cotton, and tobacco, the planters there soon turned their attention to sugar, and even Jamaica, which had at first made promising experiments with cocoa, discouraged by disasters that injured the trees, yielded to the demands of the British housewife and coffee-houses, and made sugar her leading commodity. Before the beginning of the British sugar industry in the West Indies,³² the Portuguese had supplied European countries with sugars from Brazil, but soon after the Restoration England had supplanted the Portuguese and the Dutch and was carrying muscovado in her own ships to the British Isles and the northern British colonies, and re-exporting large quantities to the Continent, particularly to Holland and Hamburg. France, though supplying her own market after 1670, partly because of her system of preferential duties, exported but little until the end of the century.³³ Thus England seemed in a fair way to monopolize the market outside of France.

Complaints against the French began to be heard as early as 1666, due to the increased output of the French colonies and to the virtually prohibitive duty that France had imposed on English sugars in order to shut English exporters out of the French market.³⁴ But the first hint of serious competition came in 1701, when Governor Codrington of the Leeward Islands wrote from Antigua that the French were beginning to tread on England's heels in the sugar trade,³⁵ and he recommended an act of Parliament prohibiting entirely all exports of beef, provisions, and lumber from Ireland

³² The date of the introduction of sugar planting into Barbadoes is uncertain. "About 1626" ("On the Sugar Trade", *Caribbeana*, II. 33) is too early; "After the Restoration" (Campbell, *Candid and Impartial Considerations*, p. 9) is too late. Ligon speaks of sugar as a staple in 1647, and Winthrop, having mentioned only cotton as a staple from Barbadoes in 1643, adds in 1646 sugar, tobacco, and indigo (*Journal*, Original Narratives ed., II. 122, 328). These statements agree with that of Scott ("Description of Barbadoes", *Brit. Mus.*, Sloane 3662). "The sugar cane was brought to Barbadoes first by one Pieter Brower of North Holland from Brazil Anno 1637, but came to no considerable perfection till the year 1645." There seems to be no good reason for doubting the truth of what Scott says, though his reputation for veracity is not high and he wrote his history thirty years after the first date mentioned.

³³ Colbert wrote to Governor de Baas October 10, 1670, "Foreigners no longer bring us sugar. We have begun since six weeks or two months to export it to them." Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy*, p. 207.

³⁴ France while levying a duty of but four livres on sugar from her own colonies, placed one of thirty-two livres on that from the foreign sugar islands. *Cal. St. P., Col.*, 1669-1674, p. 215.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1701, p. 417.

and the northern British colonies to the French islands. Between 1701 and 1725 the advance was so rapid that, according to Joshua Gee, the French were not only supplying France, but were underselling the British in the Continental market, notably at Hamburg, in Flanders, Holland, and Spain, and at the Straits, with Portugal, furnished the Levant with sugar from Brazil.³⁶

As this ominous situation began to dawn upon the British planters, a vigorous discussion arose, in which the pamphleteers endeavored to discover the cause of French success and British failure.³⁷ They ascribed the former to the preponderance of France in Europe since 1672, particularly during the period of absolutism under Louis XIV.; to the more highly organized system of colonial and commercial control whereby the mother-country and the colonies were bound closely together, working in harmony and with despatch;³⁸ and finally to state aid, judiciously furnished, to wise measures concerning trade and navigation, and to a more liberal

³⁶ Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered* (third ed., 1731), pp. 44-45.

³⁷ Gee, pp. 137-139, 142-144, 150-151. The subject was a matter of constant discussion from this time on. See *The Present State of the British Sugar Colonies Considered* (1731), p. 8 *et seq.*; *The National Merchant* (1736), pp. 85-107; Postlethwayt, *Great Britain's True System* (1757), pp. 246-268; and especially *The Present State of the British and French Trade to Africa and America considered and compared, with some Propositions in Favour of the Trade of Great Britain* (1745).

³⁸ Frequent reference is made to the French Council of Commerce established by royal decree, June 29, 1700. The council is described in *The Wisdom and Policy of the French* (1755), pp. 38-73; and in Postlethwayt, *Great Britain's True System*, pp. 246-248. The writer of the former pamphlet likens the council to a "piece of clockwork, which by its springs directs the wheels in their motion". He thinks that the plan of it was borrowed from that of the Board of Trade of 1696, but with this difference "that the French have steadily adhered to the rules and institutions of the board", while the English have not done so, "which has been the root and cause of many evils, both as it relates to His Majesty's subjects in America and to the Trade and Commerce of the English Nation". He thinks, further, that French superiority lay not in the greater ability of the French statesmen or in a warmer zeal or greater application to the service of the country, but in "the mutual Relation and Subordination of their Boards" (pp. 129-130). He adds, "if England was to commence a War against France, in support of her Trade and Colonies, what could be hoped from it, unless we first correct the Abuses, which have through time crept into the Offices" (p. 128). The early mercantilists criticized the appointment of the Board of Trade by the crown, and declared that it should have been made dependent on the House of Commons. "Why a Council of Trade was taken out of the Hands of the Parliament, when they were upon it", writes Brewster, "they can best tell that advised it." These men thought that only merchants should be members of the board, on the ground that "none are so proper to advise in Trade, as they that are bred in it". Brewster, *New Essays on Trade* (1702), pp. 55, 63. The French royal council was continued by decrees of June 22, 1722, and May 29, 1730.

policy in respect of customs and drawbacks than prevailed in England.³⁹ Over against these advantages they placed the heavy burdens that lay upon the British sugar planters. Chief among these was the enumeration of sugar, according to which sugar could not be shipped directly to foreign markets, but had first to be unloaded and landed in England, whence after the payment of slight duties it could be exported to the Continent. This roundabout route increased the cost of getting the sugar to market. Other financial disadvantages were the payment of the four and a half per cent. export duty in Barbadoes and the Leeward Islands, and the heavy and increasing customs duties in England, protests against which began to be heard as early as 1671, when Parliament proposed to lay an additional duty on sugar.⁴⁰ Similarly, the planters were aggrieved at the efforts of the sugar refiners in England to prevent them from refining sugar in the islands, an outcropping of the mercantilist doctrine against manufacturing in the colonies, and as true of France as it was true of England.⁴¹ They complained, furthermore, of the curtailing of the market by the act of 1670, which forbade direct exportation to Ireland,⁴² and they declared that while the French colonies were growing in wealth and prosperity, the British colonies were declining, suffering from an impoverishment of their soil,⁴³ from a high and increasing cost of living, and from

³⁹ Decrees of June, 1698, and April, 1717, regulating the commerce of the French colonies, prohibited direct trade with other colonies; but these decrees were in part rescinded by those of January and October, 1726, permitting the exporting of produce from the French islands to Spain. The decrees of 1726 were frequently quoted in full by English writers and were even read in the House of Commons.

⁴⁰ Petitions of the merchants and sugar refiners induced the House of Lords to amend the bill, and thus gave rise to an interesting constitutional crisis. *Cal. St. P., Col.*, 1669-1674, pp. 213-214.

⁴¹ This attempt of the sugar refiners was similar to the efforts made at a later time to restrict the wool, hat, and iron industries in the continental colonies. *Cal. St. P., Col.*, 1669-1674, §§ 519, 520. See the *Report* of the American Historical Association, 1892, pp. 36-44. We are told that all sugar for table use in Antigua in 1774 was imported from England at a high price. Probably much the same condition prevailed in all the West India Islands belonging to Great Britain. *Brit. Mus.*, Egerton 2423, pp. 122-123. There is an interesting protest against sugar refining in the West Indies in P. R. O., Treasury 1, bundle 338.

⁴² By act of 1663 Ireland was forbidden to send any of her exports, except servants, horses, victuals, and salt for the New England and Newfoundland fisheries, to any of the colonies. By that of 1670, she was forbidden to receive any of the enumerated commodities by direct export from the colonies. For the effect of these laws upon Ireland see Hutchinson, *The Commercial Restraints of Ireland Considered* (1779), pp. 181-183.

⁴³ "Our old islands, by being less mountainous, and almost entirely cleared of wood, are become extremely dry and unseasonable; at the same time that the lands in them, by long and constant planting, have so far lost the spring and

the want of an adequate circulating medium, which involved them in a constant fear of losing what specie they had. The remedies sought were a complete drawback on all re-exportation, repeal of the act of 1672, reduction of duties, direct trade with Ireland, and the privilege of free export to all points south of Cape Finisterre. In addition, some of the complainants demanded a reform of the business methods of the Custom House in London.⁴⁴ But in the eyes of the British merchant the situation became much more serious when it was discovered that the French were increasing their trade with Africa, were drawing their beef, lumber, and provision supply from Ireland and the British colonies on the American continent,

spirit of vegetation, as to stand in need of more rains than they had before. But this reflexion has never been attended to by our planters, who attribute solely to the less frequency of seasonable weather, that deficiency in their crops, which is in a great measure owing to the impoverishment of the soil." *Considerations which may tend to promote the Settlement of our new West-India Colonies* (1764), p. 37. This was not true of Jamaica, where it was computed in 1750 that out of 4,000,000 acres only 430,800 were cleared, and that in consequence the island was capable of great future development. "An Inquiry", etc., Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 30163. When the Ceded Islands were taken over in 1763 provision was made that part of the land should always be wooded to prevent the denudation that had injured the other islands. *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, IV. 583.

⁴⁴ A complete enumeration and examination of all the disadvantages presented by the writers of the period is manifestly impossible here. Dr. F. W. Pitman will soon publish his study of the economic development of the British West Indies during the colonial period, which is based on a thorough search of all the extant manuscript material. The pamphlet and manuscript literature is very extensive, the assertions made are often exaggerated and frequently contradictory, and the subjects involved, such as those relating to impoverishment, the effects of British legislation, and the want of a circulating medium, are complicated and often obscure. The best-known pamphlets are as follows: Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered* (1729); *The Importance of the Sugar Plantations* (1731); and *A Short Answer to the same* (1731); *The Present State of the British Sugar Colonies* (1731); Ashley, *The Sugar Trade with the Incumbrances thereon, laid open* (1734); *The National Merchant* (1736); Stubb, *Importance of the British Plantations in America* (1731); *Danger of Losing the Trade of the Sugar Colonies*; *The Case of His Majesty's Sugar Colonies* (1732); *The British Merchant* (3 vols.); *The State of the Sugar Trade* (1747); Postlethwayt, *A Short State of the Progress of the French Trade and Navigation* (1756); Coad, *A Letter to the Honorable the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations* (1747); Tucker, *A Brief Essay of the Advantages and Disadvantages which respectively attend France and Great Britain with regard to Trade* (1749); Postlethwayt, *Great Britain's True System* (1757). One of the best sources of information regarding conditions in Barbadoes is *Caribbeana* (1741, two vols.), covering the period from 1731 to 1740. For Jamaica, there is a valuable manuscript in the British Museum entitled, "An Inquiry into the Causes of the Present Scarcity of Money and the Bad Consequence of It to This Island, with some Proposals for a Remedy, wherein the Scheme of a Public Bank is offered" (1750). Many of the representations of the Board of Trade are of the highest importance, and a list of them is printed in the *Report of the American Historical Association* for 1913.

and in their exporting of tropical products were actually, though indirectly, invading the British market itself.

To assure the continued prosperity of their tropical colonies, the most highly valued of all their colonial possessions, both England and France were in need of two supplemental areas of supply. These were, first, a territory from which an ample and uninterrupted store of slaves could be obtained for the cane pieces, the rice fields, and the tobacco plantations of the southern and West Indian colonies, and, second, a fertile agricultural area in the temperate zone, which would provide a sufficient quantity of food and other necessary staples such as semi-tropical and tropical colonies demanded but could not furnish for themselves or obtain from the mother-country. The first of these was Africa,⁴⁵ which as the only source of negroes was the object of intense rivalry among all the maritime powers possessed of tropical and semi-tropical colonies. But, consisting as it did of a long strip of coast, upon which at that time no European state laid claim to property in land, each confining itself to rented ground suitable for factories and houses, it presented to the powers no opportunity for mutually exclusive control. Except as far as grants of monopoly led to acts of aggression and retaliation, the African rivalry took the form of a trade struggle. Quite otherwise was it with the second supplemental factor. France controlled Canada and the Mississippi, while England had her Bread Colonies from New England to Pennsylvania, which were valued by the mercantilist only because they supplied the Sugar Colonies with staples that England herself would be obliged to send when she could, were there no other source from which to obtain them.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Wood speaks of "the Trade to Africa, so very Advantagious to Great Britain, by conducing so much to the Support of our Tobacco Colonies, and Sugar Plantations", *Survey of Trade*, p. 189; and Dinwiddie, collector of customs at Bermuda, says the same, "on the supply of negroes from this [the African] coast, our sugar, tobacco and other plantations depend", C. O., 323: 9, M 24.

⁴⁶ This characteristic attitude of the British merchants toward the northern colonies is well expressed in Wood, *Survey of Trade* (1718). "Without our Southern Plantations, our Northern Colonies can be of no real Advantage to us; since what they are at present, must cease on the Decay or Loss of the SUGAR ISLANDS, from whence their Value to Great Britain chiefly arises, and for want of WHICH they would be otherwise prejudicial Colonies to their Mother Country" (p. 149). New England merchants, such as Gee and Banister, felt called upon constantly to defend New England and the northern colonies generally, before the Board of Trade, and to show the value of these colonies to England. Jeremiah Dummer, Connecticut's agent in England (1710-1730), presented a somewhat unusual view in his memorial of October 13, 1713, to the Board of Trade. "The fishery of New England", he says, "is of more concern because some years the Newfoundland fishery almost wholly fails, and by our last advice from thence there has been a great dearth and scarcity of fish there this season [1713].

Before the French obtained a footing on the African coast, the Portuguese, Dutch, and English had competed for the right to control the trade of the territory, England having seized Cape Coast Castle from Holland during the first Dutch war. With the acquisition of forts on the island of Goree and at Arguin and trading posts on the Senegal, the French began to extend their trading influence and a fourfold rivalry ensued, with the French to the north and the others in more immediate propinquity along the Guinea Coast and toward the Congo. Until 1697 the Royal African Company retained its monopoly, but in that year the trade was thrown open, and with the entrance upon the scene of private traders, among whom were many colonials, notably Rhode Islanders, the competition increased. The French strengthened their hold upon the Gambia trade,⁴⁷ while the Dutch dominated the Guinea Coast. So badly did the company conduct its business that it soon became unable to maintain its forts and garrisons, and in 1730 applied to Parliament for aid. Continued mismanagement and depression led to its dissolution in 1747 and to the establishment of a new corporation, the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, in 1750.⁴⁸ As the company's trade grew worse, the French extended their activi-

And without doubt the more fishery ground we have the greater our treasure is. As to the scale-fish and mackerel, I believe your Lordships will allow that to be of equal importance with the cod, because the Sugar Islands can't subsist without it. Their plantations depend wholly on their negroes, who are supported with this fish; whereas if the planters should for want of this fish feed their negroes with Irish beef, the charge of a plantation would consume the value of it." C. O., 5: 866, V 10.

Professor Callender, who very kindly read the manuscript of this paper in its final form, makes the following comment upon my estimate of the value of the northern British colonies in the British commercial system. "It does not seem to me that you state the case against them as strongly as the opinions expressed by the trade writers, at least of later times, would warrant. Postlethwayt, as I remember, did not scruple to hold that the northern colonies were a positive detriment to Great Britain. They actually rivalled her in the fisheries, reducing her share in them, and so prevented her sea-power from being what it would have been without them. Arthur Young held this position very strongly, in pointing out that the great development of shipping and the great number of seamen in them was not only no advantage to the mother-country but a positive disadvantage. The author of *American Husbandry* held too that their supplying the West Indies with provisions also injured her, since thereby she lost the only permanent regular market for flour and beef in the world, the corn trade of Europe being notoriously irregular, as it was the result of shortage of crops in different countries." What Professor Callender says of the later writers is in a measure true of earlier writers also.

⁴⁷ *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, vol. VI., § 271.

⁴⁸ In a memorial sent from Antigua in 1752 to the Board of Trade, the petitioners asserted that "by the failure of the African Company our rivals now have the trade". Oliver, *History of Antigua*, I. cix. For the business side of the trade with Africa, see W. R. Scott, *Joint Stock Companies*, II. 3-35.

ties southward, establishing posts at Gambia, Accra, and Whydah before 1735,⁴⁹ and trafficking within what the British claimed were their rights and privileges, under the very walls of the British forts and factories. They encroached on the company's field of slave supply and disputed with it and the private traders the traffic in gum, which they used in their hat and silk manufactures, and in gold, ivory, beeswax, and dye-woods, to the exclusion of British ships. In 1750 Postlethwayt could complain that the French had been making unjustifiable attempts for many years to raise their trade and navigation in that part of the world on the ruins of the British African trade and to monopolize that branch of commerce, upon which depended the prosperity and well-being of all the British colonies in America.⁵⁰

A more flagrant insult in the eyes of British mercantilists was the growth of a lucrative trade between the British colonies of the temperate zone and the French West Indies, whereby the French islands were supplied with the provisions, lumber, and live stock which they needed for the maintenance of their slave labor and the promotion of their sugar trade. Such intercourse was contrary to the principles on which the British commercial system was founded, in that it involved the sending of French sugars to the northern British colonies and the invasion by France of the British home market. France was weak in having no satisfactory beef and provision colonies of her own. Colbert sought to supply beef from France in order to prevent export from Ireland, and he made strenuous efforts to build up Canada as a provision and lumber supplying colony. But in both respects he failed. French beef was never sufficient in amount, and Canada never became an agricultural colony during the French régime, remaining a land of furs and romance to the end.⁵¹ The cities of France endeavored to meet

⁴⁹ Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea*, pp. 107, 172. In 1730 Dinwiddie, collector of customs at Bermuda, wrote to the Board of Trade, "There is not anything gives the French and Dutch so great an opportunity to rival us in our trade with the Spanish dominions in the West Indies, as the encroachments they are daily making on our settlements on the coast of Africa, whereby the Company, as well as every private trader, are prevented the advantage of that trade as formerly." C. O., 323: 9, M 24. In 1736 a Rhode Island sea-captain wrote from the English fort of Anamaboe on the Guinea Coast, "never was so much Rum on the Coast at one time before, Nor the like of the french shippers—never seen before for no. for the hole Coast is full of them", *Commerce of Rhode Island*, Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll., seventh series, IX. 46.

⁵⁰ *A Short State of the Progress of the French Trade and Navigation* (1750), pp. 85-86.

⁵¹ Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy*, pp. 318-325. The Northern Colonies in their defense said that if they were driven out of their trade to the French West Indies, the latter would turn elsewhere. "They have Cape Breton, Canada,

the bread and provision demand as far as they were able: Bordeaux and La Rochelle sent wine, brandy, staves, headings, and hoops; but Rouen seldom furnished provisions, supplying rather notions and assorted commodities, while Marseilles and Toulon confined themselves largely to oil, dried fruit, wines, and various light stuffs.

While thus France was failing to meet the demands of her West Indian colonies on the export side, she proved equally unsatisfactory in meeting their demands on the import side. As the French colonies produced sugar in larger and larger quantities, they accumulated an increasing amount of the by-products of sugar—molasses and rum. But neither of these by-products found extensive sale in France. Molasses was not palatable to the French taste, and the French people would not use it as food, so that the French island planters were compelled to give it to their horses or pigs or to throw it away, while rum was not wanted, because it was too raw a liquor for drinking purposes, and was discouraged because it competed when used with wines and brandies, which ranked high among French staples. Thus an important source of profit was unavailable as far as the French colonial planters were concerned. Therefore, in respect of the unity and co-ordination of the French colonial world, an anomalous condition existed, for which a remedy must be found. The French colonies had to have an adequate supply of slaves, a sufficient store of lumber, horses, and provisions, and a market for all their staples, sugar, molasses, and rum, if their success was to be assured.

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(*To be continued.*)

and also the Bay of Apalachy, and Mississippi, which the French Government would be glad to improve". *Case of the Northern Colonies*. But their opponents denied that any of these regions could be used as a source of supply. *Observations*, pp. 15, 28.